

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth through 2007

Prague

2003

Introduction

The Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth through 2007 (hereinafter referred to as the “Concept”) was accepted by the Czech government on April 7, 2003 under resolution No. 343. This Concept is based on the Governmental Policy Concept on young people in the Czech Republic through 2002 that had been approved in government resolution No. 1 of January 6, 1999 and which covers the most important and acute issues of governmental policy on children and youth.

The Concept’s contents are based on proposals put forward by the central administrative institutions involved in the issue in the Czech Republic. Research projects and documents provided by the Institute of Children and Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, data from the Czech Statistical Office, non-governmental non-profit organizations and the “Youth at the Turn of the Millennium” research project were used in preparing the Concept.

The Chamber of Youth – an interdepartmental advisory body for coordinating youth-related issues at the Education Ministry – formed a group to work on a paper in cooperation with representatives of the Education, Labor, Environment, Culture, Interior and Health ministries. These representatives worked directly on specific parts of the paper and defined tasks that are specified in the annex to the draft resolution. The paper was also discussed with representatives of youth-related umbrella organizations such as Česká rada dětí a mládeže (The Czech Council of Children and Youth), Kruh sdružení dětí a mládeže (The Circle of Children and Youth Associations) and The Council of Youth with the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions.

The Concept is based on the priorities and principal ideas of the European Commission’s White Book on Youth adopted in November 2001 and adapts them to the Czech context.

The Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth through 2007

1. The Basis of the Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth through 2007

1.1. Introduction

The foundation of governmental policy in this area includes not only the responsibility for creating conditions for the development of young people¹ and for fulfilling the tasks arising from international agreements, but also acknowledges the responsibility of the family and individual for himself/herself as per his/her age. For the purpose of this Concept, children are considered to be those persons under the age of 18 and youth persons under 26.

The government's influence on young people goes hand in hand with its support for and protection of children and youth. This support includes measures taken to address problems endangering young people or those which halt their development, as well as various innovative programs, etc. This support also includes activities sponsored by the government or governmental agencies that, within the framework of official policy, create conditions in which young people can participate in social and political life and motivate specific sections and groups of youth to undertake activities in line with the government's youth policy goals. As non-governmental organizations play an important role in supporting such activities, their operations are supported by the government.

Protection expresses the government's influence to address negative phenomena and the consequences they have on children and youth. Protection is always applied when an individual is not able, on his/her own, to deal with an environment having a negative impact on him/her and specific social phenomena. In such an event, the government is to directly apply the tools at its disposal or cooperate with other public administrative institutions, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and other institutions and organizations working with young people. An important factor in this context is international cooperation between governmental institutions and non-governmental non-profit organizations involved in working with young people (EU programs for youth, etc.).

The tools that the government applies to protect and support young people include legal regulations, economic tools, the application of research results from this area, an effective information system, a complex HR policy (selection, preparation and additional education of workers involved in this area). The goal is to create conditions for developing young people's personalities and their self-confidence in society.

The Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth in the Czech Republic through 2007 is based above all on:

- 1) The Czech government's policy statement of August 2002
- 2) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (of November 1989) and periodical follow-up reports on the fulfillment of the Concept
- 3) White Book of the European Commission – New Impetus for European Youth (November 2001)

¹ For the purpose of this document, children and young people under 26 are considered to be the "young generation" as per the concept outlined by UNESCO (in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are persons up to the age of 18, youth persons between the ages of 18 and 26). According to the 2001 census, 3.3 million people fell into these age categories in the Czech Republic. Current demographic trends are leading to a further drop in the number of young people.

- 4) Recommendations contained in the declaration adopted at the sixth conference of the ministers of education responsible for young people (November 2002)
- 5) Conclusions and recommendations adopted at the National Conference on the White Book.

Findings supplied by children and youth research projects² and documents prepared by individual ministries form an important basis for preparing the Governmental Policy Concept on the Young Generation.

While the definition of young people as a social group determined by age and specific common features remains valid (general biological-psychological, socio-economic and other specifics that require the support and protection of society), the White Book emphasizes that young people form a population group that is undergoing a dramatic transformation. For a variety of reasons, young people are becoming dependent on their parents for longer periods of time. In addition, young people in the Czech Republic are subject to the after-effects of the society's political and economical transformation after having opened up to the outside world, as well as processes related to the Czech Republic's preparations for joining the EU and globalization.

With the Czech government striving to harmonize the country's legislation with that of the EU, it would be desirable to harmonize Czech policy on young people with the related policies applied in EU countries. The EU's White Book initiates the integration of approaches to address young people's needs in the EU and measures taken on behalf of young people and to impart a European dimension to this area. In order to respect these circumstances, the submitted document reflects what was emphasized by the White Book. The European Commission openly warns that intergenerational relations are becoming more difficult as a result of demographic and social trends, and that the gap between young people and public institutions is widening, which could cause young people to become reluctant to take on their duties as citizens. As a result, the principles of independence, solidarity, responsibility and conscientiousness must be focused on throughout the entire educational system. In the future, children and youth should become above all:

- **independent** – able to make decisions and manage their personal and social lives as individuals and as members of society;
- **have a feeling of solidarity** – able to be interested in people and in working with them and on their behalf, share their interests,
- **responsible** – able to assume responsibility for their actions, fulfill their tasks and complete everything that they have started,
- **conscientious** – able to live up to moral values or an ideal for themselves and to adhere to them.

The Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth is based on a document published by the European Youth Forum³, that sets down criteria for the modern European concept of

² These are primarily a project granted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports called "The Young Generation at the Beginning of Czech society's integration into the European Structure" – a research project by IDM (Eurobarometr ČR 2002 and a multi-topic research project "The Youth 2002"), Monitoring the Fulfillment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other research projects undertaken recently in the Czech Republic.

³ The European Youth Forum is a European umbrella youth organization that associates international youth organizations and national youth councils; quotation from a document of the European Youth Forum - "11 indicators of a (national) youth policy", Brussels, 2001

governmental policy in this area. As per this document, the Concept tries to meet the following criteria:

1. support education outside the formal school system,
2. support the development of education of animators involved in working with young people in non-profit organizations,
3. create legislation on working with children and youth in order to facilitate participation and support for public administration in relation to such issues,
4. provide a budget to support the development of initiatives for young people and youth organizations, including grants for organizations' office work and projects,
5. information strategy in relation to children and youth
6. implementing the multilayer concept at all levels of public administration
7. concept based on research related to young people's situation
8. support of participation – leading young people into making decisions on life of society and the participation of youth organizations in the co-management in youth-related issues
9. cooperation among ministries – the so-called "cross-sectoral approach"
10. support innovation and creativity,
11. provide consulting services and establishes a partnership between youth organizations and public administration at all levels via common consulting bodies.

Government policy on children and youth is implemented:

1) at the state administrative level within the governmental policy on children and youth

2) in specific areas:

- youth, family and housing
- youth and education
- youth and the labor market
- participation of the young generation in social and political life
- non-governmental and non-profit organizations involved in working with young people
- youth and leisure time, mobility of the youth
- youth and health
- youth and socio-pathological phenomena
- young minorities, migrants, refugees
- youth and the Czech Republic's integration into the European Union
- youth and the environment
- protection of young people's rights.

1.2. The position of institutions and public administration in the enforcement of governmental policy on children and youth

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports⁴ is the primary public sector body concerned with youth-related issues. Other ministries, such as the Labor, Health, Environment and Interior ministries, are responsible for specific areas of youth-related issues. In regions, these activities are pursued by the youth and sports departments of regional authorities, which apply competences vested in them and/or transferred to them. In compliance with the Concept, they cooperate closely with the relevant departments of labor and social affairs, health, culture, the environment and agriculture, as do the central state administrative institutions. Local

⁴ Act No. 2/1969 Coll. on establishing ministries and other central public administrative institutes of the Czech Republic as amended.

authorities also play an important role in providing care for children and youth. City authorities, for example, have special departments that systematically deal with this issue.

The Strategy of HR Development in the Czech Republic plays a major role in coordinating the ministries involved in youth-related matters. This strategy was adopted by the government in resolution No. 210 of March 3, 2003. Measures affecting young people will be dealt with by the Council of the Government for HR Development established by the government and the Council's working group.

The tasks set down by government policy on young people are carried out not only by the Education Ministry but also by organizations that are directly subject to it – the ministry's Institute of Children and Youth, its Institute of Non-formal Education in Hořovice and The Center of Education, Information and Services in Prachatice⁵.

An important measure that has improved the Education Ministry's ability to address youth-related problems since 2002 was the establishment of the Chamber of Youth, which is an advisory body to the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports. The Chamber's task is to discuss issues related to grant policy on young people, government policy in the area, the implementation of recommendations from the Council of Europe and UNESCO in the Czech Republic, adapting EU regulations to the Czech context, etc. The Chamber of Youth is made up of representatives of Česká rada dětí a mládeže (The Czech Council of Children and Youth), Kruh sdružení dětí a mládeže (The Circle of Children and Youth Associations) and Koordinační rada středisek pro volný čas (The Coordination Council of Leisure-time Centers), directors of organizations directly managed by the Education Ministry and established to address issues related to young people, representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior that were recommended by specific departments, representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, representatives of the Youth Council of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions and regional authorities.

One positive factor in this area is how public administration has undergone reforms. Youth-related issues had not been included into legislation for low-level public administrative institutions throughout the 1990s, and district authorities did not devote much attention to these issues. Act No. 129/2000 Coll. on regions specifies one of the duties as establishing an education committee and setting down certain tasks for it. The regional authorities can provide the committee with funds for activities related to working with young people. The

⁵ The activities of the Education Ministry's Institute of Children and Youth are aimed at interdisciplinary research projects related to children and youth; the creation of concepts, analytical and methodological documents; accredited preparation and education of professional workers and volunteers involved in non-formal and extracurricular education and other leisure-time activities; the preparation and implementation of competitions and exhibitions, etc. The Institute also cooperates in preparing bills and methodological instructions with the Ministry concerning non-formal education, extramural education and other leisure-time activities for gifted youth, the EU's educational programs, providing information to children and youth according to provisions of the European Chart of Information for Youth, etc.

The Ministry's Institute of Non-formal Education in Hořovice and The Center of Education, Information and Services in Prachatice are responsible for extracurricular non-formal education and leisure-time activities for young people. They verify the education at schools and school facilities; prepare and verify methodological instructions in relation to non-formal education, extramural education and other leisure-time activities; create and verify forms of school work with national minorities and ethnic groups, prepare heads of children interest groups, etc.

legislation specifies that communities and local authorities are obliged to provide care for young people and are allowed to financially support activities related to children and youth.

Self-governing administrative units – regions – were formed in the Czech Republic in constitutional act No. 347/1997 Coll. on creating regional self-governing administrative units and an amendment to the constitutional act of the Czech National Council No. 1/1993. Regional authorities and councils provide grants to associations of citizens, humanitarian organizations and other legal and natural persons that are involved in youth issues, sports and physical education in specific regions. The committee of the regional authority for education, training and employment submits its opinion on allotting grants for sports and youth-related projects; discusses reports on the results of the activities of schools, including pre-school facilities, and fulfills other education-related tasks as per instructions from local authorities.

Departments of youth and physical education (sports) were established at all regional authorities as part of their educational sections. Their structure and job description varies by region⁶. In Prague, the department of youth is in charge of grant policy, international relations and competitions; a separate physical education department organizes sports competitions and grant policy related to sports.

The number of personnel in the youth and physical education (sports) departments ranges from three employees in the Karlovarský region to 10 in the Moravian-Silesian region.

The powers of regional and local authorities in relation to working with young people requires that documents concerning this issue be completed and brought in line with the Concept, and legislative conditions for youth work be created. It is also important to ensure that personnel are systematically educated, to define rules for close cooperation between individual public administration elements and for methodological activity.

Schools and school facilities are key institutions involved in working with young people . Leisure-time centers, school clubs and after-school centers play a major role in creating leisure-time activities, non-formal education, work with gifted children and other activities. Their development falls under the competences of the regional and community authorities.

⁶ With the exception of the Karlovarský, Ústecký and Zlínský regions and Prague, the prevention of negative phenomena is covered by the department of youth and sports. The departments of youth and sports in the Olomoucký, Ústecký and Liberecký regions do not cover sports, which is covered by the department of culture, sports and tourism at the respective regional level. They also cover work with citizen associations and other non-governmental non-profit organizations involved in working with young people. These issues are covered in all regions. This area is connected with grant policy, which is executed by all regional authorities with the exception of the Ústecký region. The development of leisure-time centers for young people does not fall under the competences of the departments of youth and physical education (sports) in the Královéhradecký, Vysočina and Zlínský regions. Those in charge of this area usually work in a department that is part of the education section. In the Královéhradecký, Olomoucký, Pardubický and Ústecký regions, the departments of youth and physical education (sports) do not cover international cooperation. The agenda of these departments is not too large. It includes elementary schools of art, children's homes, employment, handicapped children and youth, educational and psychological counseling centers and environmental education.

In the Jihočeský, Jihomoravský, Moravskoslezský, Pardubický, Vysočina and Zlínský regions, the information system for youth is emphasized. The regional authorities in the Karlovarský, Královéhradecký and Plzeňský regions are planning to cover this issue in the future.

1.3. Spheres of operation of governmental policy on children and youth

1.3.1 Youth, family and housing

Strong points

In 2002, measures were adopted to provide support for young people under 36 who are buying their own apartments. Government decree No. 97/2002 Coll. provided for the use the resources of the State Housing Development Funds in the form of a loan to cover part of the costs related to apartment construction by persons under 36. This decree allows young people to get a low-interest loan of up to 200,000 Kč that they can combine with other resources and use for constructing an apartment or a family house. The credits have been provided since April 15, 2002. This year, 350 million Kč has been set aside for this purpose.

As per governmental decree No. 249/2002 Coll. on conditions of providing allowances for mortgage loans to persons under 36 young people may - since September 1, 2002 – ask for an interest allowance for mortgage loans used for buying an existing family house or apartment. The interest allowance will be provided for a maximum of ten years, over which a mortgage loan will be paid and will range from 1 to 3 %, depending on current interest rates.

Decreasing interest rates of mortgage loans and construction savings plans, which can be combined in various ways with the above mentioned measures, will make it easier for the young people to acquire their own apartment.

Weak points

Young people – as is the case in the EU – are clearly tending to postpone marriage. When compared to 1991, the average age of brides in 2001 increased by five years (to 27 years). With men, the average age of bridegrooms has increased by four years (to 29 years). With the women's average age of first births rising, the number of risky pregnancies is growing.

The birth rate – with the exception of the period of 1988 to 1990 – has been decreasing since 1975. The fertility rate fell in the early 1980s under the replacement level (2.1 children per woman). In 2000, the rate amounted to 1.16 children. The decline in the marriage and birth rates is due to financial factors and changes in lifestyles. The drop in income caused by maternity leave is a big change in a young family's financial situation. Sociological research shows that up to 52% of men and up to 39% of young women do not plan to have a child.

More than one-fifth (23.5%) of live births were born to unmarried parents, which may result from different allowances for extramarital children and rules for providing social benefits.

- Most young people are limited in their ability to acquire their own apartments, not only due to the fact that they are at the beginning of their career and often have low income, but it is also due to the fact that they are entering the apartment market for the first time. Their situation is made worse by the fact that there are almost no affordable apartments for rent. Other forms of housing are often too expensive and thus available only to some young people and are a substantial burden on young people and their parents' household budgets.

- The situation on the apartment market in the last decade was influenced by a drop in the construction of apartments to let. In addition, 185,000 (4.6%) of the 4,013,000 apartments available in inhabited buildings are not occupied for whatever reason.
- The measures being prepared to support the development of non-profit apartments to let on the basis of legislation on “publicly useful housing associations” were not implemented because Parliament did not approve the bill.
- Start-up, or protected, apartments are not being built, although – if specific rules were observed (time of occupation, amount of rent) - the construction of this type of apartment would decrease tension on the apartment market and address the living situation of young families. This situation can be solved only by constructing new apartments for badly-off and disabled persons. These apartments should be provided to persons in need for a limited period of time and under clearly defined conditions.
- Housing for young people who leave school facilities for a special treatment institution, rehabilitation center or similar facility is an issue that is addressed only marginally and unsystematically. Young people who have finished carrying out a sentence find themselves in the same situation.

Opportunities

A plan for supporting the construction of apartments to let for those in specific income groups is being prepared under the auspices of the State Housing Development Fund. The construction of apartments for disabled and low-income persons is supported via the Program of Supported Apartment Construction, which received 150 million Kč from the state budget for this year. This program envisages, for example, housing for young people from foster care homes.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is preparing – within the reform of services - measures to support families with disabled children, although measures to increase the population and to support families with children are still subject to criticism.

Housing for young people leaving school facilities and special treatment institutions or rehabilitation centers and similar facilities is connected with the provision of social services that should allow these young people into society.

Risks

The breakdown of traditional relations, falling marriage and birth rates and an increase in the number of divorces are evidence that young people consider the family to be less important. The family is a dominant educational environment for children. Dysfunctional families are one of the main reasons for socio-pathological phenomena in youth. The existing situation does not show any improvement in the conditions for developing the family’s necessary functions – many young families (especially families with a number of children) are financially dependent on their parents (about one-fifth of young working people are supported by their parents, such as by living in their apartments) or on some form of social benefits.

The continually falling ratio of children under 15 to persons above the age of 60 (there were 100 children to 87 elderly persons in 1991, while in 2001 it was 117 old people) is evidence of how the Czech population is aging. This is a problem that is common in most European countries. Demographic prognoses show that in 30 years every third Czech citizen will be over the age of 60. If this trend continues, it will be necessary to pay much more attention to this problem when considering what the economy needs and the state's social functions if the problem is not resolved by immigration.

1.3.2 Youth and education

Strong points

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has prepared a Long-term Plan of Education and Education System Development in the Czech Republic (hereinafter referred to as the "Long-term Plan") in order to comprehensively address education-related issues. The plan outlines general tendencies and goals of education policy, defines measures to be taken by the government as well as tasks for regional authorities. The plan implements the National Program of Education Development in the Czech Republic, a White Book adopted by the government in February 2001. The long-term plan sums up concept lines and emphasizes the key points in the national program.
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has prepared a reform of the goals and contents of education (curriculum reform) that primarily envisages a transition from the learning of many facts to the development of key life skills, emphasizing the learning of foreign languages, information literacy and the transmitting of a basic knowledge of what opportunities the labor market offers. The crux of professional education is being shifted from narrowly specialized subjects to broader-based ones. The differentiation and individualization of education are emphasized while respecting children's specific needs. A key goal of the Ministry is to increase the prestige and quality of education in the sixth to ninth grades at elementary schools and to support the integration of disabled and socially disadvantaged pupils into normal classes.
- The Czech Republic took a decisive step toward the prolongation of the average length of studying between 1999 and 2000, when all secondary school classes were full. The average length of studying at secondary schools increased by 0.8 years between 1999 and 2002, while the participation in tertiary education increased by 0.35 years over the same period. This increase is expected to continue. In 2002, the Czech Republic achieved an average length of studying of 16.4 years, and the average rate of extending within the last three years was five months per year. By 2010 the country is expected to achieve about 18 years. This will result in substantial changes in the structure of secondary and tertiary education.

Weak points

- In the Czech Republic, average school attendance and participation in the educational process (which means the number of persons at a certain age that pursue any form of education) during the 1990s increased by only 1.2 years (from 13.9 to 15.1 years), while in the EU the average length of studying increased by 1.9 years (from 15.4 to 17.3 years)

over the same period. This means that, in the late 1990s, the Czech Republic lagged behind the EU by 2.2 years on average. The length of studying after the completion of secondary school is one of the shortest in Europe.

- Demographic developments in the Czech Republic during the 1990s - especially in the early 1990s - resulted in a substantially lower prolongation of the length of studying in comparison with EU countries (the average length of studying was extended by 0.9 months annually in the Czech Republic and by nearly 2.5 months in the EU). Since 1995, the length of studying in the Czech Republic has grown at the same rate as in the EU.
- The average length of studying is also influenced by types of study (full-time or part-time). The development of continuing education has recently resulted, in some countries, in a substantial increase of part-time studying (which is undertaken mostly in tertiary and secondary educational institutions, such as in various short-term courses and subjects). For example, in Australia, the U.K., Sweden and Portugal, the average length of part-time studying exceeds three years and is thus an important part of the overall picture. Similar forms of education do not have a strong tradition in the Czech Republic. Part-time studying in OECD countries amounts to 1.2 years on average, while in the Czech Republic it amounts to only 0.1 years. When adult education is developed and a comprehensive, functional system for life-long learning is in place, these forms of studying will become more and more popular.
- Studying at universities has a big impact on family budgets – a year of studying costs 30,000 to 50,000 Kč (school fees alone range from 20,000 to 80,000 per year at private schools). Scholarships only complement the financial means provided by families and students. Under these circumstances, many students work while studying (research shows that 50% of students have a job on the side, and many work regularly) instead of devoting all of their time to studying. Many intelligent young people do not want to study at universities at all. Thus it is necessary to prepare conditions for providing loans to students (for the time being, loans are offered only by Komerční banka).
- While it is clear that students participate actively in education between the first and fifth grades and do not acquire knowledge passively, in the sixth to ninth grades teachers primarily use methods that are not based on student activity and do not encourage creativity.
- Problems still exist in education focused on selecting a career and creating a suitable system of comprehensive consulting services.
- Disabled young people, and young people having special educational needs, are not successfully integrated into normal schools. This situation results in part from the absence of a functioning system of professional training for teachers that would provide the knowledge and skills necessary for work with integrated children. This situation hampers integration.
- Schools are not well prepared to educate extremely gifted children, especially children at a younger age. Schools do not focus their leisure-time activities specifically on these children.

- Some young people, especially those from a disadvantaged socio-cultural environment, fail to fully develop their educational potential and many leave the educational system without having tapped all of their abilities.

Opportunities

- New legislation on initial education and pedagogic workers will establish the legal conditions for developing the area. In compliance with European trends in education, a balanced development of all three educational forms for young people will be stressed to ensure the comprehensive development of the individual, including formal, informal and non-formal education.⁷
- The measures under preparation include a prepared reform of secondary school graduation, including a make-over of final examinations at secondary schools, which were prepared long ago. The introduction of an objective part – which will be prepared in cooperation with other social partners – will also improve the quality of final examinations at apprenticeship schools.
- The concept of life-long education requires continuing education (adult education). This is one of the principal tools of employment policy, business development strategy and an alternative way of acquiring education and qualification. Motivating factors must be strengthened and the offering of relevant educational services and effective educational forms be extended. Schools should be involved in this process as much as possible and their potential be effectively used.

Risks

- Teachers' working conditions must be changed substantially – and the profession must be made more attractive so as to attract new qualified teachers. Many steps need to be taken to reach this goal - not only increase salaries but also to introduce a career and salary promotion system, further education and professional advancement.
- Insufficient funding for implementing the Long-term Plan would decelerate or halt the prepared education reforms.
- If legislation on initial education and pedagogic workers for establishing a suitable legal environment were not adopted, it would have a negative impact on the further development of teacher education, their rating and working conditions.

⁷Formal education is a hierarchical, chronological and progressive educational system spanning elementary school to the university.

Informal education is a process in which an individual learns to assume attitudes, recognize values, acquire skills and knowledge via his/her own everyday experience with his/her family, friends and contemporaries, media and other influences and factors in his/her environment.

Non-formal education consists of organized educational activities provided by non-governmental non-profit organizations outside the established official system and whose goal is to convey life experience and skills and to develop attitudes based on a comprehensive value system. In a way, this category includes education organized by leisure-time centers and school clubs.

1.3.3 Youth and the Labor Market

Strong points

- Unlike the situation in the late 1990s, the number of unemployed graduates has been on the decline. Unemployment peaked at 84,500 people in September 1999. In June 2002, there were 54,400 unemployed graduates in the Czech Republic. The ratio of unemployed graduates to all unemployed persons amounted to 22% in September 1999 (the highest figure since 1996) and 12%⁸ in June 2002.
- Legislation has been improved so that it contains not only a ban on every kind of discrimination but also offers effective tools to enforce the ban.
- Employment services have become more effective in preventative measures related to career selection (the School Atlas, Job Selection Calendars) and employment-oriented programs for graduates (non-specific re-training, specialized practical training for school graduates, re-training – internship, practical re-training for juveniles, etc.).
- The educational system (the structure of apprenticeship subjects, optimization of school networks and study lines) is beginning to focus on the needs of the labor market in order to avoid preparing people who are of no use on the labor market as a result of their professional orientation.

Weak points

- Some young people are still prepared for their profession even though their educators do not have detailed information about what the market needs. The youngest and least educated people, or those who completed elementary school and have no other qualification, typically encounter the biggest problems, as do young people who have left professional schools. Disabled persons encounter major problems on the labor market. Some young people are already being discriminated against in comparison with other age groups when entering the labor market.
- Sociological research shows that up to 40% of young people are afraid of losing their job and one-third have experienced unemployment. Contrary to the situation four years ago, young people are changing their job less frequently (6% difference) but on the other hand it takes them longer to find a job (9% difference).
- Employers are not often able to specify what they will require from their future employees - graduates. They also insufficiently motivate young people to study professions in which there is a lack of people, such as technical vocational professions.

⁸ “Nezaměstnanost absolventů škol se středním a vyšším odborným vzděláváním” (Unemployment of secondary school and post-secondary technical school graduates) – NÚOV, Praha 2002

- From the perspective of success on the labor market, some vocational schools and apprentice training schools have many vacancies but few applicants. Universities do not respond flexibly to employers' needs, and many of them prefer preparing theoretically-oriented bachelors programs with the assumption that students will continue studying masters or educational programs.
- A European panel of companies showed that there is a lack of university graduates specialized in marketing, customer service and sales, technical development, and who would be able to assume managerial positions. Some companies have been seeking qualified people for more than three months (in 57% of the cases, there was a lack of qualified applicants, while only in 10% of the cases the applicant required too high a salary).
- One weak point is the question of how graduates can acquire work experience, which is a precondition for getting a job, and how they can use knowledge and skills acquired during the educational process. Graduates do not have enough work experience, especially those from apprenticeship training schools. Research conducted between 2000 and 2001 showed that more than half of apprentices were not in a real working environment. Young people entering the labor market join that part of the young population that is endangered by socio-pathological phenomena (such as the getting accustomed to living on social benefits and working in the gray economy) if they fail to get a job on the first attempt. Except for Italy and Greece, no EU country has an unemployment rate among youth of more than 10%. In the Czech Republic, the rate stands at 12% (90% of them do not attend any labor office programs – in Europe, this percentage amounts to about 50%).
- Graduates have unrealistic ideas about the labor market, refuse to accept jobs that do not correspond with their qualifications, have higher requirements than those of their employers and are inflexible.
- The social benefit system does not, in fact, motivate people to study further and look for a job. Lack of motivation to continue study and reluctance to look for a job follows in part from the school system's inadequate educational function (schools do not feel responsible for their clients) and pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the labor market.

Opportunities

- In order to improve the situation, "The first opportunity" pilot program has been implemented at certain labor offices. This program helps applicants find a job by using an individual approach and by activating applicants (young people up to 25 years of age who are not registered for more than six months). This program will be evaluated in early 2003, with a range of applicable measures specified and introduced nationwide.
- The labor market can be expected to improve somewhat when the Czech Republic joins the EU – young people will probably take advantage of opportunities to study abroad, voluntary service and job opportunities. Here is an opportunity for applying foreign experience with subsidized jobs (in the U.K. the number of graduates to which a job had to be allotted was decreased in this way by 7%).

- The issue of equal opportunities on the labor market for women and men is not a major social problem in the Czech Republic. Though it is recommended to support the creation of jobs with a specific work regimen, interruption of a professional career – for the care of a child, for example– should be addressed so that an agreement can be concluded between the employer and employee. Re-training during maternity leave has been included in employment legislation.
- Schools should become more responsible for their graduates and extend and increase the quality of programs at elementary and secondary schools, including teacher training (Introduction to the Labor World, Education to Profession Selection).
- The popularization of youth volunteerism can positively influence young people's prospects in the labor market.

Risks

- The weak link between professional training for meeting the labor market's needs, the failure to meet employers' requirements for better education, the problems that fresh graduates without experience encounter on the labor market and the unemployment rate among youth are evidence of the lack of consideration given to young people's needs. Being successful in the labor market is a precondition for young people's independence and social integration – the alternative is unemployment and marginalization (at present many graduates rely on the social network and are not interested in getting a job and re-training and thus find themselves on the fringes of society).
- The functioning of the social system will become more and more dependent on whether young people are prepared and able to participate in financing the social system, which is primarily based on their experience and success in the labor market.
- The increasing unemployment of Romany youth and other young minorities may worsen the poor social position of these groups in the future. Supporting programs that are aimed at supporting Romany and minority youth in looking for jobs and acquiring experience should be continued in order to eliminate this phenomenon and/or innovated.

1.3.4 Participation of the young generation in social and political life

Strong points

- Research shows that young people are not indifferent to what is going on around them. Many of them are altruistic, and more than half of them would like to participate in volunteer projects aimed at helping those in need.
- Various forms of cooperation are being developed at many schools. Research shows that teachers are more interested in further education on communication, group conflict resolution, etc.

- An important part of the participation is work with young people in non-governmental organizations, young people's willingness to cooperate in the informal education of their peers or of those who are a little younger than themselves. Non-governmental non-profit organizations formed and organized by young people do much good work in this area. Specific projects are focused on citizenship and participation education (such as national parliaments and local youth parliaments).
- A change in participation has taken place in cities and communities as of late, with more systematic work being done for young citizens. Regular activities for young people, including the participation of mayors, councilors and representatives, are an integral part of many communities. These projects of non-governmental non-profit organizations are often financially supported by city and community authorities.
- Act No. 198/2002 Coll. on voluntary service, which took effect January 1, 2003, expresses the government's support for voluntary activities and defines conditions under which voluntary service can take place.

Weak points

- Young people's participation in social and political life is not duly appreciated. Sociological research shows that most forms of political participation (with the exception of petitions) are undertaken by the middle-age and older generations. This fact cannot be entirely explained by what has happened in Czech society since 1990. Young people are generally little interested in community activities but are interested more in associations and local government.
- Young people enter a certain political environment in which an established form of political participation already exists and which they do not consider attractive, cannot influence and thus they feel excluded from the decision-making process.

Opportunities

- If young people are to participate in society, they must acquire and develop specific capabilities. This is a gradual learning process. The first step is always the most important and must be taken in one's immediate surroundings – at school, in the neighborhood, community, youth center, associations, etc. At a local level, participation can bring changes that young people can immediately see. At this level, young people have an opportunity not only to express their opinions but also to participate directly in decision-making processes. Thus it is recommended to work on a broader legal framework that would define young people's participation.
- School is the first institution in which students can learn and acquire participation procedures. When legislation on initial education is prepared, conditions must be created for improving support for student self-government from the schools.
- An improvement would mean bringing the decision-making process closer to the citizen and strengthening the control of the decision-making process at various levels. The means

of the information society can be used to start a dialogue with young people (Internet, etc.).

Risks

- The lack of opportunities to participate and the little willingness public sector bodies to learn young people's opinions on how to solve everyday problems eventually result in young people feeling estranged and passive, with some even joining extremist movements. Non-participation in elections and disinterest in the political system do not create the best conditions for improving democracy.

1.3.5 Non-governmental non-profit organizations involved in working with young people

Strong points

- Non-governmental non-profit organizations are an important part of working with children and youth. They fulfill an irreplaceable role in informal education, the offering of leisure-time activities, work with groups of children and youth at risk and work with unemployed young people. They have a big influence on the maturing of young people, their attitudes and opinions. They complement the roles that family, school and other subjects play. Churches and clerical legal entities are also engaged in this area. Non-governmental organizations can be considered a basic element of the building of a civic society.
- Non-governmental non-profit organizations working with endangered children on the basis of Act No. 359/1999 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children are subject to accreditation. When organizations meet specific conditions, they are accredited by a competent regional authority guaranteeing that quality services are provided.
- Associations establish international contacts, take advantage of the EU's youth programs and support the development of participation (39% of young people of up to 19 and 47% of young people of up to 26 believe that citizen associations can influence processes in society).
- Though associations do not have a large member base, sociological research shows that many young people are at least in contact with associations and participate in certain events (this applies naturally to the young population). These associations have an influence on many young people and not just on their members (about 25 % of children and young people).
- The government has been investing more and more money to support associations. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports' 2002 budget set aside about 179 million Kč⁹ for

⁹ Table: Subsidies provided by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to non-governmental non-profit organizations (thousands of Kč)

Subsidies	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Non-investment expenditure	123,074	143,784	162,701	173,660	168,830
Investment expenditure	17,264	14,998	10,935	12,220	10,500
Total	140,338	158,782	173,636	185,880	179,330

Note: Year 2002 – budget.

supporting non-governmental non-profit young people's organizations. Envisaged measures to be taken in the professional training of children and youth workers require that funds be increased by about 10% as compared with the current budget.

- Other grants for non-governmental non-profit organizations involved in working with young people are provided by the Labor ¹⁰, Health and Environment ministries.

Weak points

- The number of members of citizen associations involved in working with young people has decreased recently. For example, 43 organizations that applied for grants from the Ministry's programs lost members – a total of more than 21% over the last four years. This development can be explained in part by population trends. Sociological research reveals a similar picture in youth organizations in the former East Germany, Spain, France, Italy and Portugal.
- A specific drawback is the persisting separation and poor cooperation between umbrella organizations involved in working with young people in seeking a common solution and representing Czech youth abroad (in line with recommendations of the European Youth Forum).
- The position of a voluntary worker – as a member of an association - is disadvantageous when compared with a volunteer who is not a member of any association covered by Act 198/2002 Coll. on volunteer service. This has a negative impact on the conditions under which voluntary workers perform their activities and their recruitment and can have a negative impact on their motivation.

Opportunities

- Future developments in this area can be influenced by new trends in the non-governmental non-profit youth organizations, including improvements in the training of managers and other volunteer youth workers.
- Developing activities aimed at unorganized groups of young people – mainly clubs that do not require young people to satisfy specific requirements when joining. These clubs will be connected to organizations based on regular members.
- The approval of Act No. 198/2002 Coll. on volunteer service, which defines conditions of activities within volunteer services, will support the development of the activities of non-

¹⁰ **Table: Subsidies provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to projects in relation to children and youth between 1999 and 2002**

Year	Number of approved projects	Total subsidies (thousands of Kč)
1999	47	20,435
2000	78	28,872
2001	82	45,964
2002	71	48,962

governmental and non-profit organizations and allows young people to serve the community. This act makes it possible for young people to acquire working experience.

Risks

- The drop in the number of young people organized in non-governmental non-profit organizations is due to young people's minimal interest in organized activities. If the associations fail to find other means and methods of how to address – in addition to their own members – other young people that do not want to be members of any organization, the positive influence will become negligible and negative impacts can be expected.

1.3.6 Youth and leisure time

Strong points

- Research shows that the quality of young people's leisure-time education decreased during the 1990s, although this situation changed in the late 1990s. An increasing number of young people prefer demanding activities that develop their personalities. Since the mid-1990s, young people's lifestyle has been changed the most by the PC. Research also shows that the number of hours spent watching TV stopped increasing.
- At the public administration level, leisure time activities are influenced primarily by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, as well as regional and local authorities. The ministry is one of the guarantees of education outside school. Regional and local authorities manage facilities for extracurricular education¹¹. As for young people's leisure time, elementary arts schools have a strong position in the regions and are supported by government subsidies that correspond to the difference between total expenditure and income of the elementary arts schools.¹² As for the extent of leisure-time activities for children and youth provided by leisure-time school facilities, the most important role is played by leisure-time centers (Children and Youth Centers, and the Interest Activity Centers). There were 289 leisure-time centers between 1999 and 2002 (including independent centers)¹³.
- Other ministries are also involved in organizing leisure-time activities for young people. For example, the Ministry of Culture and organizations connected to it offer a variety of discounts to children and youth and prepare projects specifically for them. The Ministry supports a regional network of theaters and orchestras and activities for youth (such as concerts for youth, etc.). Museums, galleries and castles create many opportunities for young people to spend their leisure time, such as permanent exhibitions and expositions,

¹¹ There were a total of after-school care centers with 225,000 pupils, 528 school clubs (an increase of 42% against the 1996-1997 school year) with 49,000 pupils (an increase of 81 %) in the 2001-2002 school year in the Czech Republic. An important role is also played by school sports clubs.

¹² In the 2001-2002 school year, there were 469 elementary arts schools in the Czech Republic with a total of 470 branches, 224,348 students and 10,351 teachers.

¹³ More than 11.9% of children between the ages of 6 to 19 attended 18,000 regular interest sections (a 16% increase compared with 1997); work with children up to the age of 15 is prevailing (18.02%).

concerts, lectures and films. Young people may take advantage of discounts on entrance fees. Museums and galleries play an important role in aesthetic education and practical knowledge of natural and social issues within the education process. Every year, applicants for grants¹⁴ are invited to support non-commercial arts and make them accessible to the youth. Other cultural activities are also supported, such as activities of minorities living in the Czech Republic, disabled people, non-professional artists, the publishing of illustrated books for young people, lectures, reading sessions, film festivals for youth, children's radio broadcasting, exhibitions, competitions and activities to support supplementary librarians, information and cultural activities for youth. The Ministry of Culture provides grants for foreign cultural activities of children and youth ensembles. Observatories and planetariums also play an important role in educational activities for young people.

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is active in leisure-time activities for unorganized groups of young people via social workers with informal groups of youth in their daily environment and develop activities as an integral part of social prevention. The social workers are assistants working in non-profit organizations and communities whose activities are supported by grants from the Ministry, facilities for youth that have no special admission requirements operating as part of non-profit facilities and as community-established organizations. They were included in the ministry's Typology of Social Services. Act No. 359/1999 on the social-legal protection of children defines social education activities that are designed primarily for children at risk and whose goal is to offer children a variety of programs to develop their social skills and use of leisure time.
- The Ministry of the Environment – as the guarantor and coordinator of the Czech Government Program of Environmental Education (government resolution No. 1048/2000) is deeply involved in how young people use their leisure time. It provides the Education Ministry with expert support in EVVO programs. Each year, the Environment Ministry finances projects run by citizen associations involved in environmental education for young people, publishes much printed matter and instructional texts and announces specialized public contracts aimed at supporting similar non-profit organizations, etc. The involvement of youth in preserving nature is a basic tool in the development of their personal responsibility, attitudes and behavior in relation to nature, the environment and a healthy lifestyle.
- Non-profit organizations play an essential role in leisure-time activities, offering purposeful activities for the use of leisure time. There are several hundred non-profit organizations involved in working with young people in which up to 9% of the population of up to the age of 26 are registered, according to various estimates. A number of sports clubs (about 200 of them operate nationwide) in which roughly 25% of children and youth are organized are involved in providing leisure-time activities.

¹⁴ Table: Grants provided by the Ministry of Culture between 1999 and 2002

Year	Number of submitted projects	Number of approved projects	Total (thousands of Kč)
1999	359	265	12,281,8
2000	331	248	15,504
2001	382	292	20,556
2002	324	255	20,416

- Leisure time is connected with the mobility of young people, which provides a multicultural education, knowledge of foreign countries, the acquiring of new experience and improvement in foreign language knowledge. Public sector programs supported by the EU (Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates and the Youth; the Youth program creates good opportunities for meeting young people, volunteer service, training of leaders, study abroad and information for young people).
- Research results show that Czech young people – like their Austrian, Finish, Swedish and Belgian counterparts – travel abroad frequently. Within the last two years, only 20% of young Czech respondents did not travel to any EU country (in the EU, 44% of young Europeans said they had not traveled to another EU country). The most frequently cited reason for visiting a foreign country is for vacation (67%). An increase in the number of exchange programs for young people (from 11% to 16%) should be considered a positive development. Knowledge of foreign languages is closely related to mobility. The respondents' knowledge of English has improved by 15% and that of German by 8% over the last four years.

Weak points

- Despite the variety of activities offered, this area is fragmented and unbalanced. There are obvious differences between big cities and small communities in terms of what kind of leisure-time activities are offered. Lack of funding is the main obstacle hampering public sector efforts to be more involved in organizing leisure time activities for young people. In this context, the absence of legal regulations undoubtedly plays a major role. Regional and community representatives are not forced to include the care of leisure time into their priorities.
- Some commercialized activities provoke unhealthy reactions in young people (such as the offering of alcohol drinks and cigarettes in connection with leisure-time activities) and foster interest in the spending of leisure time passively (watching movies, TV, video).
- Hobbies continue to be a core of youth center activities (hobby groups, hobby clubs). While this kind of work is important, especially for children between the ages of 6 and 12, the activities should be focused on work with non-organized groups of young people and substantially increase the number of informal activities for young people who are not interested in regularly attending hobby groups and clubs.
- Despite the large number of young people involved in sports clubs and organizations, young people still suffer from insufficient physical activity. Sports and physical education are generally used as ways to shape personalities (development of activity, respect, co-responsibility, healthy competitiveness).
- Young people's poor knowledge of foreign languages is a big obstacle hindering their mobility. Young people are not well informed about formalities such as residence and work permits, recognition of qualifications, etc.
- Education and leisure-time usage do not generally attract much attention when compared to handicapped people or professional athletes. This results in insufficient support from

the society and little prestige (this is connected with the providing of material support, sponsors' willingness to provide funds, etc.). This is one of the basic preconditions for preventing socio-pathological phenomena.

Opportunities

- Public sector reform plays an important role in youth leisure-time activities, school activities in non-formal education and non-profit organizations involved in working with young people. Regional authorities support youth centers, citizens' associations and other organizations in their development and activities. Some regional authorities created as early as 2002 regional grant programs to support non-profit organizations, which is a positive step. They wish to continue these activities in the future. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports will be providing grants to regional authorities from 2003 to support local organizations operating in specific regions. Local authorities will play the most important role in working with young people.
- Youth centers have become important institutions in many cities. Their position is reinforced by the increasing number of informal activities and development of other projects that are aimed at non-organized young people, especially older school children and adolescents. This trend must be supported in the future. The goal is to increase the number of children between the ages of 15 and 18 involved in such activities. This requires that their position be defined in legislation and financing methods be changed.
- Computers and the Internet influence young people's mental state, behavior and lifestyle, and are becoming one of the dominant activities in their lives. This fact can influence whether or not young people are successful in their careers. They bring with them physical and spiritual risks and thus it is necessary to help young people in creating skills, knowledge and habits in relation to computer technology.
- The "Government Information Policy in Education" project has created conditions for young people to gain access to computers, the Internet and other modern information technologies. The use of computer technology outside schools will extend education opportunities for young people in working with IT and will have a positive effect on building an information society.

Risks

- Leisure time serves many functions for young people, including relaxation, regeneration, compensation, and education. The active use of leisure time under supervision or the leadership of qualified personnel is part of prevention of negative phenomena. Cultural activities – receptive, reproductive and productive – also play an essential role. Leisure time offers young people an opportunity for informal education. If city and regional authorities do not become more deeply involved in this area in the future, other positive changes will not be possible – including closer links between regional, city and local governments and young people's leisure time.

1.3.7 Youth and health

Strong points

- The essential role of participation of all groups of society and the responsibility of all ministries for health is reflected in the Action Plan for Health and the Environment that was approved by government resolution No. 810/1998 and in the “Health for All in Europe” program of WHO - Health 21 that was approved by the Czech government in resolution No. 1046/2002. The Czech Council for Health and the Environment, a consulting and working body of the Czech government, guarantees the fulfillment of the government’s resolutions. The Council established the Committee for Health 21 made up of representatives of the Health, Education, Environment, Labor and Agricultural ministries – and representatives of regional authorities, non-government organizations and professional associations.
- The mortality rate of children between the ages of 0 and 14 in the Czech Republic has been decreasing since the mid 1970s, reflecting improvements in professional care, especially in the prenatal period and during birth. The infant mortality rate of 4 per thousand in 2001 ranked the Czech Republic among the best countries in the world in this respect.
- A long tradition of the preventative care for children in the Czech Republic. Act No. 48/1997 Coll. on public health insurance defines the frequency of medical examination from the age of 3 in two-year periods. A total of 11 examinations should take place before a child reaches the age of one year. Other examinations will follow at 18 months and the next at three years. Endangered, chronically ill and disabled children are included into special groups that are more closely monitored by general practitioners and other specialists. More than 400,000 children are in such special care, or roughly each fifth child.
- Vaccination against infectious diseases remains the most effective and economic way to combat the outbreak of serious and dangerous infections. A high level of vaccination (95%) in the Czech Republic has stopped the origination of more than 150,000 instances of disease and more than 500 deaths.
- A system for supporting citizens’ associations was established to ensure supplementary healthcare in the form of subsidies from the Health Ministry¹⁵. In 2001, reconditioning stays abroad were subsidized for 2,553 children from 11 citizens’ associations. A total of 12,574,000 Kč was provided. A government subsidy was awarded to 7,873 children from 35 citizens’ associations for reconditioning stays in the Czech Republic. A total of 19,763,000 Kč was paid for this purpose.

¹⁵ **Table: A summary of funding provided by the Ministry of Health to youth-related projects over 1999 to 2002**

Financial means	1999	2000	2001	2002
Non-investment expenditure (millions of Kč)	67	68.4	69.7	67.2
Investment expenditure (millions of Kč)	6.2	6	4.8	3.2
Total (millions of Kč)	73.2	74.4	74.5	70.4

- Value preferences among young people aged 15 to 30 shows that all age groups consider health as having the most important value. Young people clearly realize that health is a priority and a precondition for other activities and for having a basic feeling of satisfaction from life.

Weak points

- The Czech Republic has a very low birth and fertility rates. The proportion of risky pregnancies is on the increase (for example, the number of newborns with a birth weight under 2,500 grams account for less than 6% of live-born babies but about 60% of total infant deaths).
- The most frequent causes of death in children between the ages of 1 and 14 are injuries and intoxication, which account for 40% of casualties at this age. According to WHO, accidents are considered the biggest healthcare problems for children. The mortality rate in the Czech Republic is 9.7 per 100,000 persons. Each year 20% of children are treated for incidents. This situation requires consistent prevention.
- Despite a good standard of healthcare, young people's state of health has not improved much (the sickness rate in children and teenagers has not declined, the number of dispensary children is not decreasing, the number of birth defects, allergies, nervous and locomotive organs is increasing, as is the incidence of behavioral defects and the number of major accidents).

Opportunities

- The “Health 21“ project came in response to unhealthy lifestyles, especially as it concerns measures to curtail smoking and alcohol consumption by young people, and education on a healthy lifestyle and the use of leisure time.
- An important task of the “Health 21“ program is to reduce differences in the state of health across Europe. From this point of view, the Czech Republic is not in a critical condition as concerns the state of its citizens' health. Still, the Czech Republic has its problems, and despite clear progress it has not achieved the standard found in most developed democratic industrial countries.
- In order to better coordinate activities and to find a conceptual solution for young people's health, the Health Ministry's Committee for Children and Teenagers was established as a consulting body of the Minister. The Committee will deal above all with the following agenda:
 - Problems of infants, small children and the young generation
 - Introduction of mandatory registration and the option of temporary registration
 - Expansion of newborn screening
 - Defective posture in children and teenagers
 - Cavities in children and teenagers
 - Children, youth and the environment
 - Foster care homes for children up to the age of 3
 - Network of children's bed wards

- Drug addiction in children and teenagers including smoking and alcohol consumption
 - Sexual abuse of children and youth for commercial purposes
 - Young immigrants
 - Evaluation of young people's health in relation to choice of profession.
- Prevention requires that mandatory registration, and the option of temporary registration, be introduced and the spectrum of the existing infant screening be extended; if funding is available, an annual check-up for children above the age of 3 should be introduced in the future.

Risks

- The state of young people's health and care for them reflect the socio-cultural standard of each civilized country. Childhood and adolescence are important phases of life in which each person undergoes major physical and psychical developments and acquires social and health habits that are maintained over an entire life. If people continue relying on the healthcare system and do not prevent disease by leading a healthy lifestyle, pursuing sports, etc. (among other things, leading a healthy lifestyle lowers the influence of unsuitable advertising on young people) desirable changes in the area will not take place.
- Providing more information about mandatory vaccinations and risks related to giving birth outside hospitals may eliminate increases in these negative phenomena, with their potential to have a substantial impact on young people's health. It is necessary to legislatively define mandatory registration, and the option of temporary registration, of children and adolescents with general practitioners. Doctors will be encouraged to fulfill their duty to inform about each case of mistreatment and abuse of children.

1.3.8 Youth and socio-pathological phenomena

Strong points

- The number of crimes committed by adolescents has been decreasing since 1996, as has child criminality since 1999. Since 1994 the number of prosecuted young offenders has also been declining (in 1994 – 17,302 offenders, in 2002 – 7,698) and since 1996 the number of child offenders being investigated has taken a downturn (in 1996 – 9,747, in 2001 – 9,032).
- One socially serious problem is drug addiction among young people. Children from a good socio-cultural background are able to avoid the danger of drugs, which are perceived as going against all of an individual's goals.
- The competent ministries are developing anti-drug programs, financing necessary activities and cooperating with non-profit organizations. For example, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports spent about 80 million Kč¹⁶ on its anti-drug program, the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena and criminality over the last four years.

¹⁶

Subsidies of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	1999	2000	2001	2002
Anti-drug policy	7,975	5,971	17,614	9,810

- Conditions have been created to better fight child abuse. In 2000, the Czech government accepted the National Plan for Fighting the Sexual Abuse of Children for Commercial Purposes. Government resolution No. 716 in 2002 accepted the evaluation of the Plan's fulfillment along with amended wording for the following two years that contains many important measures.¹⁷
- In 2001, Act No. 257/2000 Coll. on probation and mediation service became effective. This act motivates accused and sentenced persons to take an active approach in addressing the consequences of criminal activity, support prevention and minimize the risk of further criminal activity. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is a partner of the Probation and Mediation Service, especially in cooperation with the Probation and Mediation Service and social service providers.
- Act No. 359/1999 Coll. on the social-legal protection of children has created conditions for more effective prevention of socio-pathological phenomena. This includes above all the establishment of facilities providing socio-educational protection, particularly socio-educational facilities and educational-recreational camps offering leisure-time activities to children at risk.

Weak points

- Young people are endangered by many risks typical at this phase of life, such as drugs, alcohol, desire for sexual experience – the so-called risky behavior syndrome is becoming more evident in adolescence. Research has continually shown that violence in media has a negative influence and creates negative models (increasing aggressiveness, for example, often manifests itself in bullying).
- Experiments with drugs, alcohol consumption and smoking remain at the same (high) level.
- Despite certain improvements, racial prejudices still exist among youth, especially against Romany. Approximately 45% of young people are concerned about racial attacks on foreigners. Czech youth are less tolerant than their EU counterparts toward foreigners from poorer countries who work and live in the Czech Republic.
- Of all juvenile delinquents, roughly 50% are repeat offenders, and no improvement can be expected under current conditions.

Prevention of criminality	14,358	8,959	5,691	9,810
Total	22,333	14,930	23,305	19,620

Note: Year 2002 – budget.

¹⁷ For example, the clear recording of young victims of commercial sexual abuse in police statistics and those gathered by socio-legal protection entities, measures to curtail child pornography via the Internet, the inclusion of this issue in the professional training of social, school, health personnel and personnel acting in criminal proceedings, etc.

- Incomplete legislation covering teachers and prevention school methodologists is an obstacle to all primary preventive functions at schools and school facilities from being more successful and effective.
- Crimes committed during flight from special treatment institutions are frequent (there are about 3,000 to 3,500 reported cases of flight per year). The Czech Police register more than 1,000 crimes per year that were committed by young people on the run from a reform institution or boarding house.
- In mid 2002, a declining trend in the number of accused and sentenced juveniles started to stagnate. Since the last quarter of 2002, the number of juveniles having problems with the law has been increasing somewhat. In early 2003, this unfavorable trend became more pronounced. There was a reported 39% increase in juvenile delinquency between September 2002 and March 2003.
- Students' behavior at schools and outside the class has deteriorated, and aggressiveness has increased, as has roughness. While such behavior does not show attributes of crimes and administrative offences, it undoubtedly represents a serious problem that affects how schools operate.
- Problems may occur due to a bigger emphasis being placed on providing follow-up care for young people leaving a special treatment institution or rehabilitation center for having come of age.

Opportunities

- The Education Ministry adopted the Strategy of Prevention of Addictive Substances Abuse and Other Socio-Pathological Phenomena in organizations subject to it between 2001 and 2004. This strategy is focused above all on healthy lifestyles, making young people more resistant against negative phenomena and school activities in the area of prevention.
- The Ministry of the Interior and the Czech Police are preparing an action plan to implement a National Anti-drug Policy between 2001 and 2004. The plan includes measures to limit the availability of drugs. There are also model projects under preparation whose goal is to make drugs less available to young people. These projects will be implemented and verified in cooperation with city authorities participating in the Criminality Prevention Program at a local level¹⁸.

¹⁸ **Table: Summary of grants provided by the Ministry of the Interior to youth-related projects between 1999 and 2002**

Year	Number of projects submitted	Total (Kč)
1999	271	36,470,000
2000	305	31,230,000
2001	143	12,894,000
2002	249	15,639,500

- In order to prevent criminality, adequate measures must be adopted to support young people who were released from reform institutions and other facilities. Without support, this group is at risk to homelessness and criminality.
- The approval of legislation on courts related to the youth and the reinforcing of support for non-profit organizations operating re-socialization programs for young people who committed a crime may have a positive influence on prevention.
- The Timely Prevention Center project in Ostrava, which is one of the elements of the systems approach to care for children and juvenile delinquents, will be transformed into a general model and offered to authorities of other regional cities.

Risks

- In 1999, the number of youth being investigated reached the number of those who are being prosecuted. When committing a crime, children are often aggressive, their brutality increases and the severity of crimes increases (violence, thefts).
- Socio-pathological phenomena and criminality in children and juveniles are caused by a number of factors, including poorly functioning families, consumption of alcohol and addictive drugs, poor guidance for children at schools, insufficient provision of activities to fill leisure time, peer groups, the aggressive influence of consumer culture, the negative influence of media and advertising and the climate in society. The persisting fragmentation of prevention activities and support for them from the public sector, the insufficient creation of a positive social climate at schools and insufficient support for education on a healthy lifestyle do not establish conditions for effective and comprehensive action in this area.
- The occurrence of socio-pathological phenomena in young people or to which they are subject is supported by media presentation of crimes committed by young people as well as crimes to which children and youth were subject and the showing of violence on TV and in films.

1.3.9. Youth of minorities, migrants, refugees

Strong points

- As immigration is controlled by the awarding of residence permits, it does not influence demographic developments (foreigners account for 2% of the population while foreigners with permanent residence status account for 0.64% of the population). Immigrants tend to be adults rather than families with children. The number of foreigners up to the age of 18 amounts to 17,000, while there are 27,000 between the ages of 19 and 26. The number of children at elementary schools has not been determined. The first data acquired by ÚIV comes from the 2002-2003 school year. There were 3,100 foreign-born children at kindergartens and 10,406 at elementary schools. With the exception of Slovaks, there are 1,385 foreigners studying at Czech secondary and post-secondary technical schools. A total of 6,109 foreigners (57% are Slovaks) study master's and bachelor's degree programs at universities. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports identified – in line

with the Concept of the Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic– areas to earmark funds provided by government resolution No. 55, namely projects supporting multicultural education for young people, Czech language education and studies focused on educating and organizing seminars for foreigners.

- Young people generally have positive attitudes toward foreigners who have come to the Czech Republic to work and do business, even if they are of a different nationality and skin color, especially if they accept the prevailing behavior norms in the country and do not differ much from the lifestyle of the Czech population. At the same time, young people's attitudes to Romany have improved and are now better than those of the middle-age generation. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports prepared the projects CZ 00-02-03-01 Support for Roma Integration and CZ 00-02-03-02 Multi-Cultural Education Reform within the PHARE program, whose implementation is aimed at resolving the most burning issues of Romany education and multicultural education for the general population.
- One way to successfully eliminate socio-cultural disadvantages of Romany children is offered by more than 110 preparatory classes. In addition to teachers, more than 300 teacher assistants work in these classes (and not only in them). They are generally of Romany origin and act as mediators between the Romany community and the educational system.
- The program for supporting Romany pupils at secondary schools makes it possible to financially support them. More than 1,000 Romany pupils participated in this program in 2002 and their number is increasing.

Weak points

- The Romany minority is still facing many problems: unemployment, poor education, low qualifications and socio-cultural standards of Romany youth, and drug abuse among the young.
- Only a small percentage of Romany children attend kindergarten, and preparatory classes at elementary schools do not fulfill their purpose because they have few pupils. The responsibility for this situation partly lies with schools. One reason for the failure of Romany children is a language barrier at the very beginning of the educational process and an underestimation of education by Romany communities. The number of Romany graduates from secondary schools is still too low.
- There is a lack of interest of the Romany population in the mediation of substitute family care for children of Romany origin, and problems with permanent residence and/or the proving by foreigners - who terminated their stay in a special treatment institution in the Czech Republic because they have come of age and were not awarded asylum - that they have residency and the means to support themselves.
- Teachers are often not professionally prepared for working with the Romany community. Preparation of students at pedagogic faculties and further education of teachers are insufficient. It would be helpful to establish the position of Romany pedagogic assistants and/or family coordinators. The modification of textbooks is a certain problem. It is

essential that each textbook of this type be consulted with Romany representatives beforehand.

- The most serious problem related to foreigners is illegal work (connected with financial crime and other criminality, abusing the position of foreigners without a work permit).
- There are also problems with placing minor applicants for asylum and other children with a language barrier in a foster care home (there were 298 applicants in 2000).

Opportunities

- The homogeneity of Czech society does not mean that strict supervision over the observance of minority rights is not needed. The creation of conditions for ratifying the European charter of regional and minority languages may play a decisive role.
- The approved Concept of placing and educating children with a language barrier, including minor applicants for asylum, may help improve the existing situation. This document serves as a basis to protect and address the lives of young foreigners who come to the Czech Republic without adult supervision.

Risks

- Eliminating the problems of the Romany minority is a difficult, long-term task for Czech society that cannot be solved without influencing the young Romany generation. Romany ethics must play an important role here. Society is required to help create a Romany elite, which should play an important role in solving the Romany problem.

1.3.10 Youth and integration of the Czech Republic into the European Union

Strong points

- Young people generally welcome cooperation with Central European countries, appreciate the Czech Republic's membership in NATO and approve the country's integration into the European Union. Integration into the EU is welcomed above all by those between the ages of 20 and 26 (69%).
- Young people's opinions in the Czech Republic are formed by social institutions, media and informal structures. During the last four years, the media have started providing more information about the EU to young people. The information sources that provide most information about the rights and obligations of EU citizens to young people include TV (58%), newspapers and magazines (61%), friends (45%), schools (55%) and the Internet (53%).

Weak points

- During the last five years, young people's (up to the age of 18) support for the Czech Republic's accession to the EU has substantially decreased (from 73% to 59%) contrary to the 20-to-26-year group. Eurobarometer Flash survey (2002) shows that 72% of young Europeans between 15 and 19, and 73% between 20 and 25, agree with EU expansion.
- Contrary average young people in the EU, Czech youth consider the EU mainly as a space for free movement, the improvement of one's economic situation and employment, and – at the same time – the risk of losing cultural diversity. Young people have rather simple ideas of what it means to be an EU citizen and what his/her rights are (they do not properly appreciate the right to vote and access to social services in the EU).

Opportunities

- More information provided to youth up to 18 about the advantages and drawbacks of EU membership, and opportunities for young people in the EU, will be provided by a campaign being developed in favor of EU accession. More information will be made available after the country joins the EU.
- The mobility of Czech young people is advantageous for becoming familiar with the life of young people in EU countries, acquiring life experience and plays an important role in multicultural education. Obstacles hindering mobility still exist. The EU programs Leonardo, Socrates and Youth are trying to improve this situation and their goal is to support young people in their effort to participate in European integration, understand other cultures and strengthen basic values (such as upholding human rights and fighting racism and/or xenophobia), support in education on solidarity, support for the entrepreneurial spirit, initiative and creativity, recognition of extracurricular education and studying and the strengthening of cooperation among everyone involved in working with young people.

Risks

- Society should avoid a situation in which young people consider the EU to be primarily a space for free movement and the improvement of one's economic situation and not a new dimension of their rights and obligations. This situation would have a negative impact on the Czech Republic in the long run.

1.3.11 Youth and the environment

Strong points

- The Governmental Program of Environmental Education in the Czech Republic was approved in government resolution No. 1048 of October 23, 2000. The Ministry of the Environment, as coordinator and guarantor, is responsible for having this program carried

out. As per its competences, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is a guarantor for the area of youth, pedagogic activities and school system.

- The Environment¹⁹ and Education ministries play an important role in supporting environmentally-oriented educational and practical programs for young people and educational programs for teachers. These ministries financially support projects of non-profit organizations related to youth and teachers in the form of a tender, public contracts and direct contracts, financed projects, publish printed matter and instructional texts, etc. Between 1999 and 2002, subsidies provided by the Ministry of the Environment for programs, projects, training and activities of EVVO in relation to young people amounted to 8-12 million Kč. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports spends approximately the same amount on environmental education.
- Non-profit organizations (particularly specialized centers of environmental education, centers of conservationists and groups of young conservationists) play an important role in environmental education. Elements of environmental education have been included in the program by other non-profit organizations (including youth associations) as well.
- Cooperation between ministries has deepened in this area – particularly between the Environment and Education ministries and/or the Environment and Health ministries, which has a positive influence on coordination and effectiveness in fulfilling environmental education programs and the Action Plan of Health and the Environment.

Weak points

- Shortcomings in education – for a certain part of the young generation, interest in a healthy environment is more a declaration rather than a real effort to preserve it.

Opportunities

- The development of a specific area in relation to the youth is based (and supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) on government resolution No. 1048 of October 23, 2000 on The Governmental Program of Environmental Education of the Czech Republic and its annexes - action plan for a specific period.

¹⁹ **Table: A summary of funding provided by the Ministry of the Environment for youth educational projects and the Governmental Fund of the Environment's investments in schools or ecological education centers between 1999 and 2002**

Financial means	1999	2000	2001	2002
Non-investment expenditure (thousands of Kč)	9,098	7,685	6,469	6,573
Investment expenditure (thousands of Kč)	about 11,000	about 20,000	about 18,000	about 20,000
Total (thousands of Kč)	about 20,098	about 20,785	about 24,469	about 26,573

Risks

- Without model behavior when young people are involved in care of the environment – which is a basic tool to influence personal responsibility, attitudes and behavior toward people and the environment in which they live – education will not be effective.

1.3.12 Protection of young people's rights

Strong points

- Czech legislation emphasizes the protection of the children's rights, an issue that is covered by various legislation. In this context, the establishment of the Governmental Council for Human Rights plays a positive role. The Council's agenda also includes the rights of children.
- A concept of educating young people serving sentences has been successfully introduced and the incarceration for youth was humanized (The Concept for Treating Young and Adult Prisoners, the Program of Treating Juvenile Prisoners and the Concept of Education of Juveniles Serving Sentences).
- The adoption of Act No. 359/1999 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children was positive in terms of protecting rights. The act reflects the rights of the child as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Act No. 109/2002 Coll. on implementing special treatment and rehabilitation at schools, which defines the rights and duties of children placed in these facilities.
- The fact that convicted mothers are allowed to take care of their children in prison is one improvement made in this respect.
- The formation of the ombudsman institution also contributes to the protection of young people's rights.

Weak points

- One problem that remains is insufficient knowledge of the principles set down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child among children and those protecting their rights (many problems were identified by research undertaken in special treatment institutions in 2000, including insensitive decisions on the placement of children in foster care homes, lack of respect for children's rights during proceedings and in special treatment institutions and rehabilitation centers, insufficient application of alternative punishments, etc.).
- Each year, the Czech Police register more than 3,000 victims of crimes of up to the age of 15. About 2,000 are subject to violence and more than 1,000 to crimes of morality. Boys are victims of violent crime six times more often than girls, and girls are victims of crimes of morality three times more than boys. Roughly 20 children are murdered every year, about 100 children are maltreated and almost 400 children are intentionally injured. The

police register about 1,000 cases of sexual abuse of children. About one-fifth of these children are dependent on the offender.

- European authorities focus on the syndrome of the ill-treated, abused and neglected child, a complex social phenomenon covering the injuring of children. Cases of ill-treatment, abuse and neglect are not centrally registered in the Czech Republic: the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs registers cases at the department of social-legal protection of children, the Ministry of Health collects information about cases brought to attention by doctors and the Ministry of the Interior checks whether these cases are punishable.
- There is lack of relevant information about the forms and occurrence of the breaching of young people's rights.
- Deficiencies that complicate the protection of children's rights include insufficient legislation governing child labor, a need for more sensitivity from the police when crimes committed against youth are clarified, more active participation on the part of the police in solving cases of domestic violence and better use of the existing rights to take action when domestic violence occurs.

Opportunities

- Experience gathered during the implementation of government resolution No. 716/2002 shows that – in addition to taking measures to register young victims of commercial sexual abuse – measures for registering crimes committed against young people can be proposed. As for the breach of young people's rights, data must be collected on victims, violence in the family examined and research conducted within this area.
- The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Czech Republic will be improved when the position of the child is improved and attention is paid to young people's situation in special treatment institutions.

Risks

- Insufficient attention paid to children's rights, the ignoring of domestic violence, continuing undemocratic methods of education in families and at schools will be reflected in children's behavior in the future and when they become adults.
- Insufficient legislative protection of children's rights is a serious problem when illegal actions are taken in seeking a substitute for family care. This requires that relevant legislation be altered.

2. Lines of governmental policy on young people through 2007

2.1 The public sector and the enforcing of government policy on young people

Public sector efforts in youth-related matters must be improved, which is a precondition for successfully implementing the Governmental Policy Concept on Youth. Regional authorities' duties in youth-related areas will be based on the central-level structure and competences. A channel must be created for transmitting information and coordinating public sector tasks and activities related to young people and sports. Whether or not this goal is achieved will depend on the adoption of legislation on working with young people that – like already adopted act No. 115/2000 Coll. on support for sports – will precisely define regional authorities' competences in youth-related matters in connection with already approved legislation .

In this context, effective cooperation between specific ministries plays an important role. The Chamber of Youth, an advisory body of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, and the newly established Council of the Government for HR Development and its working group, shall perform activities with a view to this purpose.

It is essential to ensure cooperation between individual public sector levels and the methodology activity of central institutions in relation to regional authorities and/or regional authorities in relation to local authorities. For this purpose, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports shall organize regular working meetings with personnel in youth and sports departments at regional authorities so that specific tasks can be coordinated and carried out (such as competitions, subsidy policy on youth, prevention of socio-pathological phenomena, leisure-time centers for youth and international youth exchange programs).

If work in this area is to become more effective (and requirements for professional competence be fulfilled), further education must be developed in relevant areas for personnel of youth and physical education (sports) departments in regional and local authorities. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, is preparing a system of further education for personnel in regional authorities that will focus on working with youth in the above-mentioned areas and ensure that the system is implemented.

The governmental policy concept on children and youth through 2007 is based, in the area of environmental education, on Government Policy on the Program of Environmental Education in the Czech Republic (government resolution No. 1048 of October 23, 2000).

2.2 Lines of governmental policy in specific areas

2.2.1 Youth, family and housing

- The main goal is to prepare a concept for and implement a family policy via the National Program of Support for Families with Children. The program will primarily include measures aimed at improving conditions that are necessary for the correct functioning of the family and a balanced support system for families with children in the form of alterations to the social security system, loans to specific recipients and tax relief, etc.
- Government housing policy will be focused on giving selected groups of the population, including young people, better access to housing. Young people's housing situation will

be improved by regulations under preparation aimed at developing non-profit apartments to let and unifying support for mortgage loans so that allowances are provided for the purchase of a first apartment. A new government proposal will help low-income young people get apartments to let when they prefer this type of accommodation. This government resolution is the basis on which the Governmental Housing Development Fund will provide subsidies to communities for the construction of apartments to let for low- and middle-income families.

- In accordance with the Construction of Supported Apartments program, allowances for the construction of apartments to let will be provided to specific groups of the population. The program also covers the construction of apartments for young people from foster care homes, young people without a family or young people who are handicapped (crisis and supported housing).

2.2.2 Youth and education

- The basic goal is to implement the recommendations and conclusions set down in the National Program of the Development of Education in the Czech Republic, the Long-term Plan of Education and Development of the Educational System in the Czech Republic and associated legislation on initial education and pedagogic workers under preparation.
- As for education, much emphasis will be placed on areas and elements of education that are aimed at developing students' abilities in asserting themselves on the labor market and adapting themselves to change. Undergraduate and post-graduate teacher training shall include education on healthy lifestyles, knowledge of special teaching methods and courses on the Introduction to the Labor World and Education on the Choice of Profession. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports will also cooperate with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in adapting youth education to demand in the labor market. Cooperation with social partners will continue. Comprehensive consulting services and an information system for youth and parents will be further improved.
- A balanced development of all three forms of education will be stressed so as to contribute to the comprehensive development of the individual - including formal education, informal education and non-formal education. It will be newly considered whether conditions should be created for recognizing knowledge and skills acquired during informal or non-formal education as part of young people's work experience. The goal is to ensure cooperation between the family, school and non-profit organizations in developing young people's personalities, knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- In order to better support non-formal education, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is to prepare the "National Program of Support for Education and Extracurricular Education" to complement the "National Program of Sports for All".
- The government shall provide more support for educating young volunteers and workers in non-profit organizations as an integral part of the life-long educational process. For this purpose, educational conditions for these workers shall be defined in legislation on supporting work with young people that is now under preparation. Subsequently, funding conditions for education shall be adapted accordingly.

- The gradual conversion of existing teaching texts into framework educational programs will allow schools to immediately present new knowledge gained during the development of a specific subject and society's current needs and will make it easier to adapt the curriculum to specific needs (complex subjects aimed at acquiring basic social skills, participation, care for the environment, understanding the quality of interpersonal relations, enforcing basic moral standards, respecting the values of democracy, contents and vested human rights, etc.).
- The Education Ministry and universities will include in undergraduate and post-graduate training and further education of teachers preparation for devising and implementing framework educational programs, social and political participation issues for young people, education on caring for the environment and leading a healthy lifestyle, democracy and the use of teaching methods with extremely gifted children. Schools must create a better environment for teaching foreign languages and take advantage of all of the opportunities offered by European exchange and mobility programs. Teacher training will also include subjects that prepare them for work with handicapped students and students from other groups that are discriminated against, which will allow for better integrating such children.
- One goal is to lower the number of injuries at schools, to adopt and evaluate measures to fight against bullying and violence among children or committed against them. For this purpose, the methodology and educational activity of the relevant public sector bodies is to be improved.
- Given the importance of pre-school education, permanent and systematical attention will be paid to developing preschool education, educating youth in artistic disciplines at elementary arts schools, those with specific educational requirements -- including gifted children -- and creating conditions for developing activities for young people in leisure-time centers and school clubs as an effective tool to prevent socio-pathological phenomena. Cooperation between schools and non-profit organizations is also important.
- Another goal is to adapt secondary school curricula to the needs of specific regions, the labor market and the self-realization of future graduates. Attention will also be paid to gradually eliminating unnecessary interregional structural differences in the curricula of secondary and post-secondary technical schools.
- In order to implement the curriculum reform goals and support the development of each individual, a system of interconnected guidance, diagnostics and information services will be completed in order to integrate educational and psychological guidance systems and choice of profession.
- To better support non-formal education, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is to prepare the "National Program of Support for Education and Extracurricular Education" to complement the "National Program of Sports for All". In addition, it shall be considered how to compensate professional and volunteer workers involved in this area.

2.2.3 Youth and the labor market

- The goal is to continuously provide professional education of young people at schools for entry into the labor market and so as to respond to the Czech Republic's planned accession to the EU. In order to make graduates adaptable to the labor market, the general education element of training for a future profession, language education and computer literacy are to be improved. Schools shall more closely cooperate with future employers, and their evaluation will depend primarily on the success of their graduates in practice, which will be reflected in the formation of secondary school networks and the development of bachelor's study programs.
- Another goal is to develop information sources for young people concerning the choice of profession, vacancies, working conditions and social protection, etc. Information will be provided at places where young people spend the most leisure time, such as schools, clubs, information centers for youth, etc. It is essential to continue providing information within the consulting services system via the Information and Consulting centers at labor offices.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is to prepare, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, measures to make it easier for young people to conduct business, use consulting services and funding and other ways for supporting young entrepreneurs so as to respect the current trends in preparing young people for doing business.
- In order to reduce the number of unemployed graduates without work experience, youth volunteer service, work in non-profit organizations and motivational measures for re-training will be used. In addition, specific support programs will be implemented for youth having a difficult time finding a job, especially Romany youth.
- The implementation of the equal opportunities program shall be focused on harmonizing child-care needs and job opportunities for young women.
- When considering support for graduates in the labor market, conditions must be created for establishing opportunities for acquiring work experience in non-profit organizations.

2.2.4 Young people's participation in social and political life

- Young people's participation in the public sector allows them to be involved in decision-making processes and to influence society, their environment and other matters that are important to them. The young generation's participation in social and political life is a key task set down in European youth policy. Considering the conclusions and recommendations contained in the European Commission's White Book on Youth, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – in cooperation with regional authorities and non-profit organizations – is to prepare measures for increasing young people's interest in public life and to fund specific programs aimed at encouraging young people to participate in social and political life. The young generation's participation in social and political life will inevitably require that a legal framework be created. This framework will be provided by legislation on working with young people that is now being prepared by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

- As in other European countries, one goal of the Czech Republic is to create conditions for establishing youth councils and parliaments that will be open to non-organized youth and be independent of political groups at the nationwide and lower public sector level. The authorities are to closely cooperate with these youth councils and provide consulting services concerning young people.
- The issue of young people's participation in social and political life is to be included in social science lessons. The educational process is to emphasize the acquisition of practical skills that are necessary for participation. Legislation on initial education that is being prepared will form a legal framework to improve the operations of student government. In order to make information more accessible for young people, information centers for youth nationwide will be supported while taking into account systems working abroad.

2.2.5 Non-profit organizations involved in working with young people

- The basic goals in this area include support for activities of non-profit organizations involved in working with young people as key entities organizing leisure-time activities for young people and providing them with extracurricular education.
- Public sector institutions are to continue systematically supporting non-profit organizations in the form of annual support programs for work with youth, the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena, work with disabled and socially handicapped people, activities related to environmental education and other activities, the provision of adequate funding for their activity corresponding to the development of the state budget.
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports shall introduce over 2004 to 2006 a new system of support for non-profit organizations working with young people that will be based on differentiated financing of these organizations' activities. The program shall consist of support for core activities and for developing innovative areas of working with youth, such as young people's participation in social and political life, volunteer activities, work with gifted youth, occasional activities for non-organized youth, activities aimed at acquiring information and protecting the environment, etc.
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is to introduce a system of "licensed non-profit organizations" that would obtain a formal promise that they will receive funding over a given period of time (three years, for example) if defined criteria are satisfied.
- In compliance with the legislation now under preparation, an accreditation system will be introduced in selected areas of working with youth (such as organizing camps for youth, education of leaders and other children and youth workers and the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena). Representatives of non-profit organizations will participate in establishing conditions for the awarding of accreditations.
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and organizations directly managed by it are to provide regional authorities with methodology assistance in cooperation with local non-profit organizations involved in youth-related work.

- When property managed by the Fund of Children and Youth in Dissolution is settled, it will help non-profit organizations in further developing work with youth. The Ministry of Finance is to bring the dissolution process to an end, take over the rest of the property and prepare, in cooperation with the Education Ministry, conditions for using the balance.
- In connection with Act No. 198/2002 Coll. on volunteer service, it must be considered whether legal regulations should be established for defining volunteer workers with youth for inclusion in the legislation now under preparation.

2.2.6 Youth and leisure time

- One goal going forward is to link and coordinate young people's options for leisure-time activities. The government and regional and/or local authorities are to create conditions for effectively coordinating activities at schools for non-formal education, effective subsidies and other policies and are to support the activities of non-profit organizations and other parties.
- The main goals include efforts to develop leisure-time facilities for youth, including leisure-time centers and school clubs. The programs and activities of these facilities will be differentiated so as to respect the structure and interests of the young generation. The general phenomenon is to make the activities more attractive and give those young people who do not regularly take part in these activities more choices. In order to achieve this goal, conditions must be created for developing club activities for youth and organizing occasional activities for non-organized children and youth. Leisure-time centers are to improve their activities in participation, work with information and informal education. Special attention is to be paid to specific groups of young people, including socially handicapped and gifted youth, etc.
- As the quality of activities in leisure-time centers depends on how well youth workers are trained, such training for non-formal education and youth volunteerism in non-profit organizations is to be supported. The training will be based on the Concept of further education of workers involved in non-formal education that was accepted by the Education Ministry and in legislation now under preparation. Personnel training will be largely funded by institutions at all public sector levels.
- In order to increase young people's mobility, mobility programs will be evaluated as to how well they support their intended goal. In the future, the main emphasis will be placed on eliminating obstacles preventing young people from participating in these programs. The information system for youth will concentrate on working and study conditions in EU countries.
- The development of international cooperation will also be supported, especially as it pertains to youth-related issues, the providing of information about youth-related developments and cooperation in specific issues such as legislation, participation and information, etc.
- Young people's leisure-time activities will be coordinated and supported mainly by regional and local authorities, which will subsidize not only non-profit organizations

involved in youth work but also other subjects that, for example, establish and operate public playgrounds and sports grounds and other facilities at which young people can spend their leisure time.

- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, in cooperation with regional authorities, will create conditions for closer cooperation between schools and non-profit organizations involved in extracurricular education, especially in providing the necessary spaces and materials, creating opportunities to present what these organizations offer to secondary school students. Special attention will be paid to socially or otherwise handicapped children and extraordinarily gifted youth.

2.2.7 Youth and health

- In compliance with the Youth for All in the 21st century program, the goal in this area is to further develop the health of the population, which is influenced by the quality of the environment and lifestyles. This goal is included in the White Book National Education Development Program in the Czech Republic. The program defines new lines of educational and curricular policies. A special emphasis is placed on young people's competences as to leading a healthy lifestyle. Acquired knowledge, skills and habits allow young people to effectively and adequately conduct themselves in various activities and situations that strengthen health.
- The child mortality rate will be decreased and the overall state of health of this age bracket improved by increasing the quality and effectiveness of health care (the principal task is to decrease the number of birth defects by improved effectiveness of prenatal diagnostics and timely treatment, to reduce the number of children with a birth weight under 2500 g, to improve prenatal care during risky pregnancies, to support nursing, improve the quality of young people's nutrition, focus attention on young people's environment, to legislatively establish the mandatory registration of children with a pediatrician, to involve general practitioners in detecting ill-treated, abused and neglected children, to increase the number of examinations for children over the age of three and, least but not least, to pay more attention to the perinatal and prenatal care of immigrants).
- It is assumed that the broadest possible health care, including vaccinations, will be provided to this population group free-of-charge. In order to respect this requirement, medical treatment standards for young people, and quality control of this treatment, will be introduced and primary care along with prevention will be developed, including prevention of serious injuries in young people.
- The responsible public sector institutions are to support education activities focused on individuals and families in order to give them better access to information about healthy lifestyles, particularly on nutrition and family planning. Unsuitable advertising affecting the healthy lifestyle is to be controlled.

2.2.8 Youth and socio-pathological phenomena

- Education on healthy lifestyles is a precondition for effective primary prevention of socio-pathological phenomena in young people. The goal in this area is to encourage the

development of a positive social climate at schools, minimize causes of socio-pathological phenomena and their impact on youth. As a result, conditions will be created for the activity of all subjects that are involved in preventative activities (primary prevention) or the re-socialization of individuals at risk.

- Conditions for implementing primary prevention and support for these activities at schools will be substantially improved. In order for schools to develop an effective prevention system, this area, including the position of teachers within the system, will be governed by legislation under preparation on initial education and pedagogic workers.
- Non-profit organizations play an important role in the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena. As a result, it is assumed that the public sector will continue providing these organizations with goal-oriented subsidies in the future.
- In order to make the prevention of negative phenomena more effective and subsidy allotment more goal-oriented, cooperation among ministries is to be improved in prevention, support given for selected projects focused on specific phenomena, especially the prevention of alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction, bullying, the sexual abuse of children for commercial purposes, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the preventative activities.
- The completion of legislation governing young people's legal responsibility for illegal actions, courts specialized in youth and the more active use of alternative punishments adequate to the delinquent's age will play a positive role.
- Another important goal is to more effectively protect youth against the negative influence of media. As a result, possible legislative alterations will be considered.
- Another goal is to curtail adverse trends in the increasing number of accused and convicted youth and to support secondary and tertiary prevention activities and the re-socialization of individuals at risk. The Concept of education of juveniles and young people is to be adapted to the sentence service conditions and implemented.

2.2.9 Young minorities, immigrants and refugees

- Based on documents approved by the government in this area, cultural and social development conditions for minorities must be improved and the employment rate of young Romanies increased via compensation programs.
- Programs for young minorities and immigrants will be supported in leisure-time centers.
- The Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with other ministries, is to create conditions for better integrating foreigners in the Czech Republic and which will take into account their impact on the labor market. Individual ministries will continue fulfilling measures set down in the Concept of Romany Integration. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is to support specific programs focused on education, such as expanding the assistant network, preparatory classes and support for Romany students. The concept of Romany integration shall be prepared for other areas – such as making profit-making activities and housing available.

2.2.10 Youth and the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union

- One of the government's major goals is to accelerate processes related to the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, which is expected to take place in 2004. The goal is to provide more information about the advantages and drawbacks of EU accession on an age-group basis. When the Czech Republic joins the EU, programs for young people will be supported with a view to providing them information about the changes that accession will bring.
- Integration into the EU will create ever more opportunities and the need for foreign language knowledge. As such, language education at schools and universities, the deeper involvement of foreign-language teachers in mobility programs and bilateral exchange programs will be more supported. Community programs such as Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and the Youth support international project development, such as GLOBE and others can help much in this area if they are well implemented.

2.2.11 Youth and the environment

- The goal in this area is to increase young people's preferences for leading a healthy lifestyle and to educate youth on assuming desirable environmental attitudes and behavior while emphasizing the following:
 - quality training for teachers in educating youth on environmental issues
 - to include cooperation with environmental education centers, non-profit organizations, cultural organizations and the like into the school curriculum, as this is important part of the educational process and plays a role in how young people form a relationship with the environment.
- The Action Plan of Health and the Environment has been extended to include the "Health and the Environment" topic. The fourth congress, which will be held in 2004, will be focused on this topic. Based on the conclusions adopted by the congress, the approved recommendations will need to be adapted to the Czech context.

2.2.12 Protection of young people's rights

- For the protection of young people's rights, it is essential to continue educating and improving legislative matters for the young generation as well as teachers and parents. As non-profit organizations play a major role in educating children as to how to protect their rights, it is desirable to support non-profit organizations' projects aimed at such education.
- The successful implementation requires collecting and using necessary data in order to improve young people's position. Topics including citizenship, multiculturalism, human rights (including international agreements binding on the Czech Republic and other key documents, international organizations involved in observing human rights), children's rights and duties will be included in framework educational programs for individual educational levels and age groups.

- Education on children and human rights will also be included in non-formal education, especially at schools. The responsible ministries are to ensure that education on the protection of young people's rights is included in public television and radio broadcasting.

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of April 7, 2003 No. 343 +P

**on the Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth through 2007
and the Final Report on the Fulfillment of the Governmental Policy Concept in relation
to Czech young people through 2002**

The G o v e r n m e n t

I. a s s u m e s

responsibility for the healthy development of young people and the creation of conditions for their active participation in the country's social, political and economic life and considers this issue to be a priority.

II. a p p r o v e s

1. the Governmental Policy Concept on Children and Youth through 2007 that is included in Part III of document ref. No. 331/03 (hereinafter referred to as the "Concept"),

2. tasks to ensure the implementation of the Concept for 2003-2004 as specified in an annex to this resolution;

III. t a k e s i n t o a c c o u n t

1. the Final Report on the Fulfillment of the Governmental Policy Concept in relation to Czech young people through 2002 that is included in Part IV of document ref. No. 331/03,

2. that the financial obligations resulting from the tasks defined in Subsection II/2 of this resolution will be covered in 2003 from the Czech state budget and will be taken into account when the national budget is prepared in the future;

IV. c h a r g e s

1. the First Deputy Premier and the Interior, Education, Health, Culture, Defense, Labor, Environment and Informatics ministers

a) to continuously fulfill the intentions outlined in the Concept and to ensure that the tasks specified in Subsection II/2 herein are carried out;

b) to develop programs for their respective ministries to fulfill governmental policy on children and youth through 2007 and to set aside funds for these programs in their budgets in each year;

2. the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports to prepare and submit to the Government

a) an analysis of the financial requirements for the Czech budget arising from the Concept until May 31, 2003,

b) a report on the fulfillment of tasks outlined in Subsection II/2 and a proposal of new tasks for 2005 to 2006 until December 31, 2004,

c) a final report on the fulfillment of the Concept until December 31, 2006.

To be realized by:

The First Deputy Premier and Minister of the Interior

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports

Minister of Health

Minister of Culture

Minister of Labor and Social Affairs

Minister of the Environment

Minister of Defense

Minister of Informatics

For information:

Hejtmans (District Administrators)

The Premier of the Government

T a s k s
to ensure the implementation of the Governmental Policy Concept on Children and
Youth through 2007
over 2003 to 2004

The tasks shall be fulfilled on a continual basis and are to be completed by the end of 2004. The tasks related to issues concerning young people specified in other Czech government resolutions are not included herein. Specific ministries will cover their financial requirements in 2003 from specific budget heads. The financial requirements for 2004 will be considered when the Czech budget is prepared for 2004.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports shall

1. prepare a concept for developing young people's participation in social and political life in all levels of public administration, and have the Concept's conclusions and recommendations included into Czech legislation;
2. ensure – in cooperation with the responsible ministries – that research and information activities will be carried out in order to detect and address youth-related issues:
 - a) to establish a national register of research on young people with the Ministry's Institute of Children and Youth,
 - b) to ensure that broad-based research projects in the Institute are continually implemented.
3. – in connection with the adopted Strategy of Addictive Drug Abuse and Socio-pathological Phenomena in organizations subject to the Ministry between 2001 and 2004:
 - (a) include into framework educational programs under preparation issues of a general nature aimed at the acquiring of basic social skills, an understanding of the quality of interpersonal relations, the applying of fundamental moral standards, respecting democratic values, the contents and indefeasibility of human rights, education on a healthy lifestyle, etc.
 - (b) give the school prevention methodologist more time for methodology work by reducing the number of his/her teaching hours,
 - (c) to prepare a strategy for preventing socio-pathological phenomena in young people between 2005 and 2008.
4. continue adopting measures aimed at reducing the number of injuries at schools and school facilities;
5. provide a methodology for special regional office departments dealing with non-formal education at schools and extracurricular education in non-governmental non-profit organizations while emphasizing the key issues in the Ministry's White Book on Education and the EU's White Book on Youth, such as participation, information, work

with young people who do not belong to any organization, and the preparation of methodology documents;

6. support – in cooperation with regional authorities - the long-term development of non-formal education in the regional education system, the further development of school networks for non-formal education; establish a methodology and coordination centers for non-formal education in existing facilities and make them partners of organizations directly managed by regional authorities;
7. prepare new governmental support programs over 2004 to 2006 for non-governmental non-profit organizations involved in working with young people that will be based on financing work with young people in a differentiated way (support for the organizations' core activities and project development, innovation methods);
8. prepare the introduction of a system of licensed non-governmental non-profit organizations involved in working with young people, and verify whether the system works in practice;
9. to prepare – in connection with the approved legislation on working with young people - an accreditation system for the education of leaders and those working with young people and in the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena.

The Ministry of Culture shall

10. continue protecting young people against the negative influences of media, support the organization of film festivals for young people, radio programming for children and the development of educational projects for young people;
11. support activities aimed at having young people use their cultural heritage with a view to strengthening their sense of belonging to the community, the region and the country as a tool to increase young people's cultural standard;
12. hold each year nationwide competitions in a variety of arts disciplines; support young artists via different programs; foster the organization of cultural events for young people funded by the Ministry of Culture (film and music festivals, etc.); support specialized cultural institutions involved in artistic activities for young people; support the creation and presentation of art work intended for youth.
13. prepare – in cooperation with the responsible ministries – specialized cultural and educational programs for children from a socially and culturally challenging environment.

The Ministry of Defense shall

14. adopt – while taking into account the abolition of mandatory military service between 2006 to 2007 - measures aimed at reducing negative phenomena among draftees serving in the army until the mandatory military service is abolished, and prepare measures to

eliminate negative phenomena with newly enrolled professional soldiers (bullying, the cast system, etc.).

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs shall

15. analyze the situation of Czech families in cooperation with other involved institutions; prepare a Report on the Family and a Governmental Family Concept Policy based thereon until 2005. All steps of the preparation process, including outputs, are to be submitted to experts and the general public for discussion;
16. hold an international conference concerning the institutional securing of the family, which will be a part of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, by late 2003;
17. prepare amendment No. 359/1999 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children; the act should above all protect children against mistreatment and abuse, the illegal handling of children when substitute family care is sought and define other conditions for non-profit organizations to guarantee that these organizations ensure social and legal protection in a quality and professional way;
18. include current needs related to unemployed youth into the National Action Employment Plan for 2003 and continue implementing the EU's youth directives, including the continuation of verifying new methods of working with clients and the application of individual action plans.

The Ministry of the Interior shall

19. complete the Action Plan to Fight Spectator Violence, as per recommendations from EU institutions, and submit it to the Czech government.

The Ministry of Health shall

20. aim to reduce the infant mortality rate; reduce the risk of birth defects, provide necessary treatment and healthcare to all children free of charge, including:
 - reducing birth defects by improving the effectiveness of prenatal diagnostics, including the elaboration of a screening system in the Czech Republic, treating specific groups of birth defects at specialized health facilities, and elaborating a system for the long-term monitoring of children with birth defects;
 - decreasing the number of children with a birth weight under 2500 g by improving the pre-natal care of risky pregnancies, including preventive measures;
 - continue developing health centers that are part of the "baby-friendly" program;
 - to include the mandatory and temporary registration of young people in legislation;
 - to ensure adequate health care for immigrants.

21. continue working systematically in prevention, including accident prevention, which includes:
 - reducing the death rate and disabilities among young people due to accidents and violence by introducing a process for general practitioners who suspect that a child could be ill-treated, abused or neglected, including sexual abuse for commercial purposes, and by supporting the preparation of programs aimed at preventing violence done to children;
 - maintaining accident prevention;
 - focusing on nutrition for young people;
 - substantially reducing the number of young people damaging their own health, such as by the consumption of drugs, tobacco and alcoholic drinks;
 - focusing on the issue of “The Children and the Environment”.
22. actively develop the existing system of free comprehensive examinations for young people, including:
 - broadening the spectrum of the existing newborn screening focused on the hereditary metabolism defect in the Czech Republic;
 - extending the existing system of preventative examinations by including annual preventive examinations of children over 3 years of age if funds are available;
 - continue improving the inoculation system.

The Ministry of the Environment shall

23. coordinate and continuously update – in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – tasks related to environmental education in relation to the fulfillment of Government resolution No. 1048/2000 of October 23, 2000 on the Governmental Education and Edification Program in the Czech Republic.

The Ministry of Informatics shall

24. actively participate in computer and Internet education. The Ministry – in line with its goal to increase computer literacy within four years – launched a National Educational Program of Computer Literacy and will continue it. The program is aimed at teaching the basics of PC operation and the Internet to those who are interested. Other educational projects will follow this program, which will use the infrastructure built for the National Educational Program of Computer Literacy. Some schools will also participate in this project.
25. provide support within the “Governmental Information Policy in Educational Process” project, which provides young people with access to computers, the Internet and other state-of-the-art IT.

